



FACT SHEET

Cut Out Domestic Violence

Why Do Victims Stay?

People often believe that victims of domestic violence will be safe if they just leave the batterer. But a battered person is not free to separate from an abuser at any time and there are many barriers to leaving. **The biggest reason that a victim of domestic violence stays in an abusive relationship is fear. Victims believe, and the evidence has shown, that leaving is potentially the most deadly time.**


Most victims leave and return several times before permanently separating from the batterer. It is important to remember that ***leaving is a process***.

BARRIERS ALSO MAY INCLUDE:

- ❑ **Fear that the children will be taken away** – Batterers threaten that they will take the children (either legally or illegally) if the victim dares to leave the relationship.
- ❑ **Children** – Children may miss their father and the victim may feel guilty for splitting up the family. It might be difficult to find reliable childcare.
- ❑ **No transportation** – A victim of domestic violence may not have access to a car or a driver's license. If a victim does have a car, the abuser may check the mileage; he may also disable the vehicle. This is particularly problematic in areas where there is no public transportation available.
- ❑ **Economics** – Victims of domestic violence – especially women who are stay-at-home mothers – may be financially dependent on the batterer and lack the necessary resources to leave or the work skills needed to provide for herself and her children. In rural areas, there is often a lack of available services and safety nets.

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- ❑ **Isolation** – The batterer may have cut off access to support systems, not allowing the victim to see friends, make phone calls, and attend meetings, etc., so the victim is not able to talk about what is happening or reach out for help.
 - ❑ **Hope for change** – Some victims stay with their partners because they love them and have made a serious commitment to the relationship. They may believe that there is hope for change, especially when the abuser promises he will never harm again.
 - ❑ **Loss of Security** – Victims may not have the support of family, friends, religious group or other community members. Leaving the relationship may mean leaving one's entire community.

It is very important that a victim of domestic violence be referred to a domestic violence program for information and assistance with safety planning and emergency assistance, as well as information about economic supports, including job training and employment opportunities.

This material was adapted from the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence publication entitled *Helping Battered Women and Their Children in Rural Communities: A Guide for Cosmetologists*.

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